



**THE NEW JERSEY  
ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE  
COMMISSION**

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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# **HIGHLIGHTS**

of

## **The 4<sup>th</sup> Italian American Leadership Convocation**

***PROMOTION OF ITALIAN HERITAGE  
THROUGH EDUCATION***

**SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2005  
AT  
CAMDEN COUNTY COLLEGE  
CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY**

# **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CONVOCACTION**

## **GATHERING ITALIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY LEADERS AND EDUCATORS**

The New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission held its 4<sup>th</sup> Italian American Leadership Convocation at Camden County College on Saturday March 19, 2005. The event was a success, bringing together over 50 attendees from Southern New Jersey who listened to a variety of speakers and participated in working groups in order to discuss various educational programs that may be implemented by the Commission. The attendees included leaders of Italian American organizations, Italian educators, and Italian academics. Dr. Phyllis Della Vecchia, the first Italian American woman appointed as the President of a New Jersey College, and current President of Camden County College, gave the keynote address. Her presentation reminded those in attendance of the importance of teaching Italian heritage, culture and language at all educational levels. This Convocation was organized by the Community Advisory Council, chaired by Mr. Frank Gargione and Dr. Eileen Poiani.



**Dr. Phyllis Della Vecchia**  
*President of Camden County College*



**Attendees at the 4<sup>th</sup> Italian American Leadership Convocation on March 19, 2005**  
*Hosted at Camden County College*

## **COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES SPECIAL PARTICIPATION FROM:**

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| • Provost of Camden County College:            | Dr. Ray Yannuzzi           |
| • Vice-Consul of Italy in Philadelphia:        | Dr. Gilda Rorro Baldassari |
| • Assistant Dean of The College of New Jersey: | Dr. Rosa Zagari            |
| • Commissioner:                                | Ms. Barbara Lazzaro        |
| • Community Advisory Council Co-Chair:         | Mr. Frank Gargione         |
| • Community Advisory Council Co-Chair:         | Dr. Eileen Poiani          |
| • Community Advisory Council Member:           | Mr. Louis Capelli          |
| • Community Advisory Council Member:           | Mr. Sal Gambino            |



**Dr. Ray Yannuzzi**  
*Provost of Camden County College*



**Dr. Eileen Poiani, Vice President of St. Peters College**  
*Co-Chair of the Community Advisory Council*

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF CONVOCATIONS

Since 2003, the Commission's Community Advisory Council (CAC) has organized a series of working meetings for the Italian American community in different parts of the State of New Jersey. The CAC is one of fifteen Committees of the Commission and is comprised of seventeen Council Members, drawn from different professions and regions of New Jersey. The focus of the CAC is on creating networks among the NJ Italian American community and increasing the public's involvement in promoting the Italian Heritage. The CAC hosts these convocations as a means of generating direct lines of communication between the public and the New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission. The CAC organizes presenters on particular topics of interest and then records public requests and suggestions in an effort to develop program ideas, create future community events, and advise the Commission.

## 2005 CONVOCATION AGENDA

The Convocations are structured around the recommendations generated by the attendees of the previous Convocation. Among some of the recommendations provided through the Survey taken in March 2004, at the 3rd Convocation were included:

- A. Building a NJ Congress of Italian Organizations
- B. Developing a community website and master calendar of NJ Italian events
- C. Developing a database of NJ Italian Organizations
- D. Endorsing cultural and commercial projects with Italy
- E. Sponsoring commission roadshows throughout the State
- F. Supporting the development of the Casa Italiana
- G. Focusing on promoting Italian Heritage and Language Studies in New Jersey

As the first six major recommendations were in process of being implemented by March of 2005, the CAC opted to structure the Convocation's agenda around item "G", related to promoting Italian Heritage through the support of educational programs. The agenda covered the following topics:



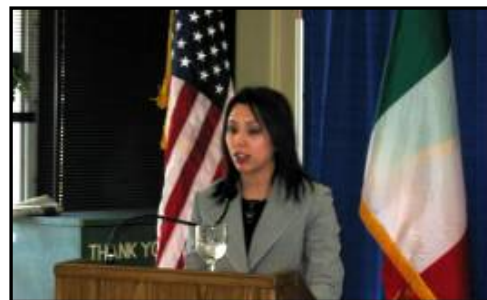
**Mr. Frank Gargione Outlining Day's Agenda**  
*Co-Chair of the Community Advisory Council*

Following a series of presentations on the educational topics, the attendees of the event were asked to separate into working groups. These working groups were then asked to focus on the issues presented and develop ideas as to how to create programs and how to further support the promotion of Italian Heritage through education. After lunch, the groups elected team captains, who reported the working group ideas back to the assembly.

## 4<sup>th</sup> CONVOCATION AGENDA

- 1. Welcome
- 2. Keynote Address by Dr. Della Vecchia
- 3. Review of 2004 Convocation and Congress
- 4. Ways of Promoting the Italian Language in NJ
- 5. Ways of Promoting Italian Studies in NJ
- 6. Ways of Promoting Italian Heritage
- 7. Working Group Discussions
- 8. Team Captain Presentations

**Key Topics Addressed**  
*March 19, 2005 Convocation*



**Ms. Gina Pezzicola Organizing Break-Out Sessions**  
*Assistant Director to the Commission*

## **PRESENTATION #1 “PROMOTING THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN NEW JERSEY”**

The opening presentation on education was provided by Dr. Rosa Zagari, Assistant Dean and Professor of Italian at The College of New Jersey. Dr. Zagari noted the importance of teaching the Italian language not only in universities and high schools, but also at the elementary and earlier levels as well. She exhibited children’s books that she personally read to her children, and noted successes in early Italian education. Dr. Zagari examined the many benefits offered to bi-lingual students and the importance of giving every student a chance to develop their linguistic skills. In addition, she commented on her work on developing extra-curricular interests at the university level for students to generate more interest.



**Dr. Rosa Zagari**  
*Assistant Dean of The  
College of New Jersey*

Dr. Zagari volunteers her time with the Commission as a member of the Higher Education Committee, is a member of the Community Advisory Council and will soon serve on committee that will be dedicated solely to promoting the Italian language in schools.

## **PRESENTATION #2 “PROMOTING ITALIAN STUDIES IN NEW JERSEY”**

The second presentation related to education was provided by Dr. Gilda Rorro Baldassarri, who addressed the issue of promoting Italian Studies in New Jersey. As pre-university education is paramount to shaping the worldviews of NJ’s future generations, Dr. Rorro Baldassarri expounded, she has been concentrating her efforts to teach Italian Heritage in the NJ school system. While not all students can be exposed to the Italian language, she observed that NJ’s students can be taught about the contributions of Italians, Italian Americans and the Italian civilization to the world. She explained that the mechanism for this effort is the development of an Italian Heritage Curriculum, which could be diffused as lesson plans



**Dr. Gilda Rorro Baldassarri**  
*Honorary Vice Consul of Italy  
And Commissioner*

to teachers throughout the State for all subject matters. Dr. Rorro Baldassari emphasized that this Curriculum should not be targeted only to Italian language students or to Italian American students, but to students of all backgrounds and heritage. By developing Curriculum that can be layered into existing Department of Education requirements for various subjects, the lesson plans become non-intrusive.

In fact, she explained, the “Universality of Italian Heritage” Curriculum being tested by 11 school districts in the State of New Jersey, is developed on precisely that model. Over 150 teachers have tested the lesson plans on Italian Heritage to over 7,000 students. In order to continue to roll out this project to the entire state, the Italian American community will have to get behind the project and help market the Curriculum – which is voluntary at this point – to the almost 600 school districts from North to South Jersey.

Dr. Rorro Baldassari serves as the Honorary Vice Consul of Italy in Philadelphia and volunteers her time with the Commission as the Chairperson of the Curriculum Development Committee. She has over 30 years experience in the field of education, having served for much of that time at the New Jersey Department of Education.



### PRESENTATION #3 “WAYS OF PROMOTING ITALIAN HERITAGE IN NEW JERSEY”

The final presentation was given by the Executive Director of the New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission, Mr. A. Roger Rmarinzoli. Mr. Marinzoli began by identifying the examples of demand in the Italian American community for understanding the Italian Heritage. He also highlighted the need to promote positive images of Italians and Italian Americans, due to the level of negative stereotyping in the media and the ignorance of the contributions of Italian civilization. Mr. Marinzoli then broke down the term “Heritage” in to a series of categories, ranging from language to music and arts to culture. He then highlighted potential ways that the community could help in



**Mr. Roger Marinzoli**  
*Executive Director to the Commission*

meeting this demand for Italian Heritage, by supporting certain general institutions that promoted Italian Heritage: a) universities; b) private institutes; c) organizations; and d) even companies that do business with Italy. Mr. Marinzoli then elaborated on a series of programs that are being developed by the NJ Italian American community that need assistance to be launched. Specifically, he discussed the Golden Age of Naples Art Exhibition at Rutgers University (planned for 2007), major festivals in the State and the idea of creating regional “Virtual Tour” conferences with the support of the Italian Government.

### PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

The New Jersey Italian and Italian American Commission took some time during the Convocation in order to highlight the hard work and dedication to some individuals who have served the Commission in a variety of ways. Commissioner Barbara Lazzaro presented these commendations on behalf of the Commission. The first certificate of appreciation was presented to: **Dr. Phyllis Della Vecchia**, as the Convocation was partially funded through her generosity on behalf of Camden County College. She also continues to serve the community as an inspiration to many Italian women, as the first female president of a New Jersey College. The second certificate was presented to **Dr. Ray Yannuzzi**, Provost of Camden County College, who serves on the Community Advisory Council and made the 4<sup>th</sup> Semi-Annual Convocation possible by contributing the venue to the Commission. The third certificate went to **Mr. Louis Capelli**, former President of Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA) who actively promoted this event in Southern New Jersey. The final certificate of appreciation was presented to **Mr. Michael J. Martino**, Art Teacher at H.B. Whitehorne Middle School in Verona, NJ who adapted Language Arts Pilot Lesson Plans into visual arts lessons and submitted wonderful feedback to the Commission, proving that the Pilot Project can be adapted to all forms and methods of teaching.



**Mr. Michael J. Martino**  
*Teacher of Curriculum Project*



**Barbara Lazzaro Presenting Commendations**  
*Commissioner*

## WORKING GROUP SESSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the presentations and luncheon, the attendees divided into several working group teams, based on topics recommended by the presenters. Each team discussed a series of ideas, focused on the top three recommendations for the Commission, elected a Team Captain and then reported back to the general session. The main recommendations are listed below:

Promoting Italian Language	Promoting Italian Studies	Promoting Italian Heritage
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formation of Committee in Commission to focus issue</li> <li>2. Develop database of university Italian programs</li> <li>3. Develop database of adult and children Italian programs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Italian Organizations need to support Curriculum Project</li> <li>2. Approach Board Members to receive Curriculum approval</li> <li>3. Involve local PTA to market Curriculum Project</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commission should develop Italian art programs</li> <li>2. Commission should develop Italian music programs</li> <li>3. Community should develop "Scuola Italiana"</li> </ol>



**Working Group Teams Receiving Instructions During Convocation**  
*Camden County Community College*



**Mr. Louis Capelli**  
*Working Group Leader*



**Mr. Bob Imordino (left) & Mr. Giorgio Marinzoli**  
*Listening to Working Group Session Reports*



**Working Group Team Captain Reporting**  
*Italian American Educator*